

## A GUIDE FOR DISTRICTS IN REQUESTING FUNDING FROM COUNTY GOVERNMENT

### 1. TABULATE DISTRICT SERVICE TO LOCALITIES AND LAND OWNERS

A. Collect and Compile Information--Appoint a committee to collect and compile information on miles of terraces, acres strip cropped, waterways, farm plans developed, assistance to land owners other than farmers, work conducted with public utilities in stabilizing right-of-ways, the number of watersheds developed and the cost savings the county realizes by not having to clean out road ditches. Consult with SCS, Extension, and ASCS in gathering such data. Use information on work on forestry. Put dollar value on all previous assistance and practices (yearly if possible, and total). Since counties tax, show them the benefit they get back in dollars.

B. Estimate Economic Impact--Estimate the economic impact on the community because of salaries paid to personnel living or working within the community who work with or assist districts. Use yearly estimate and total. i.e. the average one-person field office costs around \$60,000. Those are Federal dollars coming into the community.

C. Calculate District Official Contribution--Point out contribution of time given by them in working on conservation activities. Establish yearly and total value to the county.

### 2. TABULATE LOCAL JURISDICTION ASSISTANCE TO DISTRICTS

Contact County Clerk, County Executive, Treasurer, or other appropriate official requesting a search of records for exact amount of all past appropriations, utilities, office space provided and other assistance to the district. Convert this to actual dollar value of what the County has contributed to assist the district.

### 3. COMPARE BENEFITS TO FUNDING

Compare the value of conservation practices applied in the County to the funding provided by the County to the district. Show the value of results received and of achievements resulting from district activities and leadership.

### 4. PREPARE PACKET

Assemble information explained above and include copies of information such as the long-range plan, annual plan of work and other appropriate material and provide it each year.

### 5. VISIT LOCAL DECISION MAKERS

Have at least one district official visit each member of the County board, hand-deliver the informational packet, explain what is being done and discuss district activities. The district official should be accompanied by an SCS or district employee to aid in answering technical questions.

### 6. DEVELOP DISTRICT BUDGET

Carefully consider the district needs and later prepare and attempt to justify a realistic and meaningful district budget.

### 7. PRESENT BUDGET REQUEST TO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Make budget presentation for annual request for appropriations at the appropriate time as established by the County Board.

### 8. FOLLOW UP

Each year, visits should be made to deliver copies of annual reports and plan of work to show what has been done with money appropriated and visit often throughout the year.

NACD North Central Region

January 1992

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## SOME KEYS TO SEEKING FUNDS FROM COUNTY GOVERNMENT

### Two Universal Aspirations

1. Everyone wants to be loved, admired, remembered favorably, treated fairly and never played down. In short, people want to be "sought." This includes politicians.
2. Everyone needs to feel he is "a worthwhile member of a worthwhile group." Including politicians.

Based on these two aspirations, it behooves a district to begin an involvement process at the earliest possible time; seeking--in particular--to personally identify these people with the programs as widely as may be possible.

People who have funds start committing themselves to personal identification at the moment they make a move that expresses open interest or desire. That is why the evangelist always wants the converts to come forward.

### Some Axioms That Go With This Process

Seek their advice or opinion  
Promote meaningful visitation  
Ask them to join  
→ Quote them, with adequate visibility  
Ask them to speak at your events  
Seek their testimony  
Use their names  
Take their pictures  
Pay attention

### Six Deadly Sins of Asking County Boards for Money

1. Ad-libbing--no study, no planning, no preparation, no consultation, no organization before you make your request.
2. Panhandling--asking for support merely because you need the money. No explanation that details the amount given.
3. Automation--human part of the request gives way to mechanics. Request is abdicated to the postman.
4. Averaging--Accent on a percentage increase or just plain averages usually leads to cuts or no increases.
5. Pessimism--more often than not we aim too low and plead rather than request. Whenever you let them know things aren't going well, the chances are everything will stop right there.
6. Parsimony--the good omelet needs enough broken eggs. More often than not costs are estimated too low.

In addition, County Boards need to understand--

1. That a district is a legal body accountable to the public through general elections;
2. That districts have a sound accounting and audit system;
3. That districts created by the people were created to rely on public funds including those from counties; and
4. District Boards are capable of setting priorities, administering programs and making hard decisions.

NACD, North Central Region

January, 1992

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## SPECIAL ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**What kind of  
services will I get?**

**What will the  
assessment cost?**

**When are the  
public forums?**

*"Local solutions to local problems."*



**Thurston  
Conservation  
District**

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### Board of Supervisors

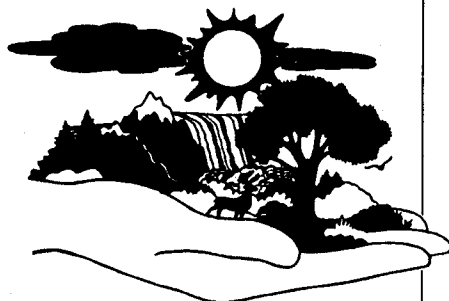
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## Assessment sought for natural-resource protection

**I**n September, the Thurston County Commissioners will decide whether to establish a special assessment to support the activities of the Thurston Conservation District. This assessment will create a fund dedicated to the conservation of Thurston County's natural resources.

All Thurston Conservation District residents are linked to each of our area's natural resources. We drink the water, eat the fish and shellfish, build houses from the timber, garden and farm in the soil, and enjoy the diversity of wildlife.

The long-term stability of our area's economy, value of our property and preservation of Thurston County's character depend on the conservation of what now seems plentiful.

### Who is the Thurston Conservation District?

You are. In 1948, the citizens of Thurston County voted to form the Thurston Conservation District. District boundaries are the same as those of the county. Therefore, if you live in Thurston County you are a District resident.

The work of the Thurston Conservation District is directed by the District board of supervisors. These five volunteers are elected by popular ballot to represent District residents in the development and implementation of programs to protect our area's natural resources. The District's motto says it all: "Local solutions to local problems."

### What does the District do?

We deliver services directly to the residents of the District. Our programs are based on helping individual landowners solve their resource protection concerns.

Unlike county and city governments, we are able to work on private lands, directly for the landowner to:

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✓ Help keep our surface water clean, which benefits commercial and recreational shellfish beds, fish habitat, recreational use, drinking water and wildlife habitat.

✓ Protect ground water from agricultural sources of pollution, so we have clean water for household, agricultural and commercial uses.

✓ Create, enhance and protect wildlife habitat so we can all continue to enjoy the diversity of wildlife which share Thurston County with us.

✓ Create, enhance and protect fish habitat for recreational, tribal and commercial uses.

✓ Manage forest resources for sustainability of economic, wildlife, fish and recreational uses.

✓ Conserve our area's soils to assure we will always have productive gardens, farms and forests, and to reduce impacts of erosion on surface water quality.

The District is not a regulatory agency and does not have an enforcement role. We offer an important voluntary action-based alternative for solving resource-protection problems.

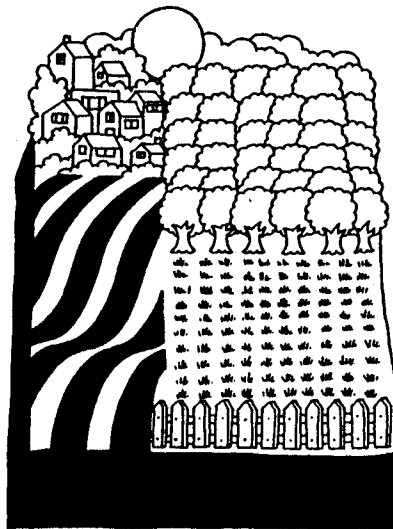
### **If I want help, how much does it cost me?**

All District services are available without charge to District residents.

### **How are District services delivered?**

Typically, a landowner contacts the District with a concern about shoreline or building site erosion, wildlife or fish habitat improvement, forestland management or the impact livestock or farming can have on surface and ground waters. These people recognize the stewardship role we all share, but need to learn about ways to get the job done.

The District first responds to these requests for help by working with the landowner to develop a resource protection plan. Then, we back up the plan with help putting it into action. In many cases we are even able to arrange funding or labor for the project.



### **Why a special assessment?**

By establishing a dedicated fund through special assessment to support District services, landowners in Thurston County will be able to count on getting the answers they seek. Right now, the District is almost entirely funded by grants, which limit the kind of work we can do — and where we can do it.

For instance, our current grants only cover livestock owners living in the Eld, Henderson or Totten-Little Skookum watersheds. We have less than \$10,000 a year to spend helping people who do not fit within the grant limitations.

Those requests for services go on the District's waiting list, which is now more than three years long.

### **How much will the assessment raise?**

The District needs to raise \$360,000 - \$380,000 per year from the special assessment. This amounts to \$5 a year per parcel. (See details below.)

Beside providing a foundation for District programs, this investment will be used as local match to bring as much as \$1,000,000 a year in additional grant money to our community.

### **How will the money be spent?**

The Thurston Conservation District will use the special assessment funds and associated grants to deliver the following programs to District residents:

**Farming for Clean Water program:** Provides conservation planning, technical assistance and cost-share to both commercial and non-commercial farmers to reduce or eliminate agricultural sources of non-point pollution of surface and ground waters by solving site-specific problems.

**Soils management program:** Provides resource planning, engineering, design and education on soils management and erosion prevention to land owners or managers, local governments and resource agencies.

**Riparian, wetland and wildlife habitat program:** Works with landowners to protect, enhance and restore upland and urban wildlife habitat, stream and river corridors, lakes, ponds, and wetlands through conservation planning, technical assistance for implementation and cost-share.

**Conservation education:** A multi-faceted program which reaches students, members of community organizations, farmers and the general public with natural resource conservation education, information and training.

**Forest Stewardship program:** Provides forestry resource planning for stewardship and sustainability to owners and managers of non-industrial forestlands, and small or incidental woodlots. Assessment funds will not be used for this program.

### **Aren't we already paying someone else to do these things?**

No. Thurston Conservation District services are unique because:

✓ We have extensive technical expertise through our partnership with the federal Soil Conservation Service.

✓ We work directly for private landowners to solve their site-specific concerns.

✓ District programs are developed

in direct response to local needs and are not the mandate of an unseen big government.

✓ The District is not a regulatory or enforcement agency. Our programs are based on education and technical assistance through voluntary cooperation of landowners.

✓ We don't conduct studies or spend years writing plans. We are action oriented. Our time is spent getting problems solved.

### **Where will the money come from?**

All landowners in the District, with certain exceptions, will pay the special assessment fee when they pay their property tax.

The assessment will be \$5 per parcel per year with an additional 10¢ per acre for parcels larger than one acre.

Here are some examples of what landowners will pay:

City lot: \$5 a year flat fee

Five acres: \$5 flat fee, plus acreage fee (5 acres x 10¢ per acre = 50¢), totals \$5.50 a year.

800 acres of farmland: \$5 flat fee, plus acreage fee (800 acres x 10¢ per acre = \$80), totals \$85 a year.

### **Who are the exceptions?**

Seniors who qualify for tax relief based on income will not be assessed.

Lands owned by non-profits, such as churches will be exempt.

Services to state, federal and city

lands will be on a fee-for-services basis.

Our forestland stewardship program will be funded through means other than the assessment.

Currently, land within the 1948 boundaries of Yelm, Tenino and Rainier is not in the District. Over the next year we will be talking to the people in those areas to find out if they want to be annexed.

### **Will the rate go up in the future?**

By law, the District cannot raise the assessment above the proposed amount. It would take an act of the legislature to raise the fee above \$5 per parcel.

## **What will happen if the assessment doesn't pass?**

*Failure to pass the special assessment will have the following impacts:*

### **The District will not be able to respond to emergencies**

Without the assessment, District activities will continue to be restricted to the rules set by grant-funding sources. This means that regardless of how important our citizens may think it is to solve a problem, we will be at the whim of people who don't live in our community.

A good case-in-point is the recent rejection of the District's grant application for a technician to work on solving concerns about manure on dairy farms. Even though the dairymen and their neighbors placed a priority on the District doing this work, the Department of Ecology said the Chehalis and Nisqually River basins, where most of Thurston County's dairies are located, are ineligible to receive Centennial Clean Water Fund grants.

The District assessment will give Thurston County's residents control over how we protect the area's natural resources.

### **District residents may have to pay consultants to get the help they seek**

As growth pressures increase in Thurston County, the stress on the environment is multiplying. More and more people are calling the District for help. When District residents call our office, they are doing so because they recognize a community responsibility to share in the stewardship of our natural resources.

Because we have no funding other than grants, most of these incoming calls end up on our waiting list. Until we establish funding to help these people, their only other choice is to hire a consultant — if they can afford to. Consultants are expensive. Few landowners are likely to be willing to develop and implement conservation plans if they must bear the burden of that additional cost, when it is the entire community which benefits.

### **Action plan implementation will be hampered**

Implementation of a number of watershed action plans will be hampered without assessment funds.

Conservation District farm plans and Best Management Practice implementation are cited as the most effective remedial action for agricultural non-point pollution in the Eld, Henderson, Totten-Little Skookum, Nisqually and Chehalis plans and in the groundwater action plan for northern Thurston County.

Many taxpayer dollars and hundreds of hours of citizen volunteer time have been invested in writing those plans. It's time to put them into action.

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## **District will lose ability to acquire additional grants**

We all know about the tax dollars we send out of Thurston County. Through acquisition of grants, we can bring some of it back in.

The District has been able to bring more than \$800,000 in grant money into the county over the last three years. Most grants require at least 25 percent of the total program costs be paid through local sources. In the past, the District has used Soil Conservation Service contributions to fulfill that local-match provision.

We have reached the point where all available SCS contributions are fully committed as match and cannot be used to acquire additional grants. This means we must come up with another source of match.

The money raised by the special assessment will give the District enough match potential to bring in as much as \$1,000,000 a year in grant money to Thurston County residents. Without the assessment, the District will not be able to apply for grants until our current ones expire.

For example, the District is a participant, along with Thurston County government, in grant applications to do intensive non-point pollution correction work in the Eld and Totten Little-Skookum watersheds.

The District's portion of those grants will require more than \$100,000 a year in local match. Without the special assessment, the District will not be able accept those contracts because match is not available from any other source.

Other grant applications which will be affected include

resource technicians for the Henderson, Nisqually, Chehalis, and McAllister watersheds.

## **District residents will not be able to comply with laws**

Our whole community wins when a farmer implements a Conservation District farm plan because the plans assure our surface and ground water resources will be protected from agricultural-based pollution. Both the dairy waste discharge permit and the county's non-point ordinance will increase the demand for farm plans from livestock keepers.

In the case of the dairy waste discharge permit, farm plans exempt farmers from the permit fee as an incentive to get a farm plan. In the case of the non-point ordinance, District cooperators are exempt from the restrictions and associated fines of the ordinance for the same reason. The District will not be able to deliver resource plans to those farmers without a stable funding source.

## **Resource protection will stop being voluntary and become regulatory**

District residents are demanding District services. The people of Thurston county are not willing to stand back and ignore natural resource conservation.

Without the Thurston Conservation District in a leadership role in this arena, the void will be filled by regulatory- and enforcement-based agencies. The Conservation District's special assessment is our best chance to keep natural resource protection a voluntary endeavor.

## **How to get involved**

The Thurston Conservation District wants to hear from you on the special assessment proposal. Come tell us whether you think you'll be getting your money's worth. Here are some ways to get involved.

### **Speak out at our public hearings**

**Tuesday, July 7** — Olympia School District Administration Building board meeting room, 113 E. Legion, starting at 7 p.m.

**Wednesday, July 8** — Tenino Elementary School multi-purpose room, 301 Old Highway 99, Tenino, starting at 7 p.m.

### **Send us written testimony by July 22 or give us a call**

Remember, you are the District. We need to hear from you to assure District programs continue to reflect the resource-protection concerns of District residents.

If you want to know more about the details of the assessment proposal, call or drop by the District office to receive copies of the assessment budget, annual plan of work by watershed, and long-range plan.

**Thurston Conservation District, 2407 Pacific Ave. SE, Olympia 98501**  
**Phones: 754-3588 or 352-6368**